# Examinations Access Arrangements

**Policy**

Examinations Access Arrangements

**Headteacher**

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**Policy Review Dates**

| Review Date | Changes made | By whom | Date shared with staff |
|---|---|---|---|
| May 2026 | New Policy | TTE | May 2026 |
| October 26 | No Changes | TTE | Nov 2026 |
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| Date ratified by Governors | Review Date |
|---|---|
| November 27 | September 2027 |

## INTRODUCTION

This is intended as a guidance document with teachers and parents being the target audience. The Examination Access Arrangements Policy explains the actions taken to ensure inclusion throughout the school for all students with learning needs, including those with formally diagnosed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The policy forms an integral part of our teaching and learning philosophy, which seeks to create a learning environment whereby every individual student may fulfil their potential.

## DEFINITIONS

DISABILITY

Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on someone's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

A candidate has "special educational needs" as defined in the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years. Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability includes substantial and long-term sensory impairments such as those effecting sight or hearing, mental health difficulties and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN.

## WHAT ARE ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS?

Access Arrangements are confirmed by Bedale High School (BHS) and put in place for formal examinations. They allow students to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind access arrangements is to meet the particular needs of a candidate without effecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which Awarding Bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make, reasonable adjustments.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment. A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available.

Access Arrangements

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend upon a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment. There is no duty on the Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an assessment.

Special Consideration

Special Consideration is a post examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to

reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time of the examination/assessment requiring authoritative support and at the discretion of the awarding body.

## Access Arrangements at Bedale High School

BHS aims to ensure that all students have equal access to examinations and are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged over their peers by any long term, substantial SEN or learning need which fall into the following four categories:

1. Communication and interaction.
2. Cognition and learning.
3. Social, emotional and mental health.
4. Sensory and/or physical needs.

We will do this by applying the rules for Access Arrangements as set out in the most recent Joint Council for Qualifications guidelines. These are updated every year on the 1st September and run through until 31st August. The currently released document will always be the first reference point in determining the correct access arrangement for a student. We believe it is important to abide by the JCQ regulations, so that there is parity in how access arrangements are awarded throughout a student's secondary schooling.
We will use every opportunity to identify students' needs from their first contact with the school. Professional reports, including private, are requested that demonstrate a SEN or learning need and a recommendation for a reasonable adjustment to be made to meet the student's needs and the type of access arrangements that are appropriate. Access arrangements reflect the support that is usually given to the student in the classroom (within reason), internal exams and mock examinations. This is commonly referred to as 'normal way of working'.

### When might students need to be given Exam Access Arrangements?

An Exam Access Arrangement (EAA) is a provision or type of support given to a student (subject to exam board approval) in an exam, where a particular need has been identified and is provided so that the student has appropriate access to the exam. During Key Stage 3 (KS3), informal access arrangements, based on information gathered from primary school, independent assessments and teacher feedback, may be put in place for students. The use of exam arrangements in KS3 is not a guarantee that they will still be in place during KS4. As a school we formally assess for access arrangements from July in year 9 and throughout year 10. If we have new admissions to the school then they may be tested in Year 11 also.

### What evidence is needed to apply for EAA?

There are a number of pieces of evidence that can be used to apply for EAA to the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ):

- Form 8 report from a Specialist Teacher or Specialist Assessor completed no earlier than the beginning of year 9.
- Subject teachers – examples of work as appropriate and feedback.
- A history of need – the arrangement must not suddenly be granted to the candidate at the time of his/her examinations.
- Results of baseline tests e.g. reading/comprehension age, writing tests, standardised psychometric testing.
- Further reports/evidence from professionals – i.e. consultant or medical professional.

The key principle for any formal access arrangement is that the SENCO, or the assessor

working within the centre, can show a history of support and provision. The arrangement must be the candidates 'normal way of working' and cannot suddenly be granted to the candidate at the time of his/her examinations.

Private Educational Psychologists' Reports

A growing number of parents have their children assessed by private educational psychologists and submit the reports to the SENCo as evidence that their child should be awarded extra time, or an additional form of EAA. These assessment reports are often very detailed but also cost a significant amount of money. This means that parents who are unable to obtain a private report through their financial circumstances are put at a disadvantage. As and exam centre we must be consistent in our decisions and ensure that no student is 'either given an unfair advantage or be disadvantaged' by any arrangements in place. Often private educational psychologists recommend that children should receive EAA which can be in conflict with the history of need seen in school.

The school may accept private assessments provided that:

a) The parents have informed us that a private assessment is taking place
b) The details of the private assessor, including details of their appropriate qualifications, have been passed on to the school
c) The private assessor makes formal verbal or written contact with SENCo to discuss the student and the school's perspective of their potential needs before the assessment takes place
d) The private assessor completes Section C of Form 8 AND signs it by hand
e) A private assessment, even if it meets the criteria outlined above, will only be accepted as an application for an internal investigation into an access arrangement

If the advice of the private assessor for EAA conflicts with the centre tester (a member of staff holding a current formally recognised qualification enabling them to assess for EAA) then the recommendations of the centre tester will take precedence.

## Procedures

Students would be considered for Exam Access Arrangements if:

- They have had EAA at KS2 for their SATs
- The results of baseline screening, using LASS, DRA or Vernon indicates a need
- Subject teacher(s) make a referral
- We receive relevant information from previous school/education provider

An important principle is that just because a student has received EAA in the past, it does not necessarily follow that they will continue to receive EAA as their needs may very well have changed. For example, a student whose baseline testing at KS2 shows a reading speed score below the threshold required for EAA may not qualify for EAA at KS4 as their reading speed may have improved to the extent that it no longer meets the exam board criteria.

## Baseline testing in Year 7

Some students in Year 7 (and above) are tested using LASS, DRA and/or Vernon spelling test. These tests can help identify students with a weakness in reading, writing and holistic skills. If a major concern is uncovered at this stage, the SEND team will, instigate reading intervention and informal access arrangements.

Parental Referral

Parents can contact the school to ask for advice about testing if they have any concerns with the progress and learning of their child. Once contact has been made with the parent, the SENCo will investigate their concerns by sending a “round robin” to the child’s teachers to gain information. Following this, a decision will be made about the most suitable course of action.

Teacher Referral

As with Parental Referrals, teachers can refer a student to the SEND team where they have concerns about the learning and progress of a student in their class. All of the student’s current teachers will be asked to give feedback to gain information, and following this a decision will be made about the most suitable course of action.

How do staff and parents know whether a student has EAA?

Teaching and support staff can access the SEN list on class registers and the EAA list on SharePoint. The information about results of assessments for EAA are kept confidentially in line with school policy and are shared only on a need to know basis. Parents will be contacted by the SENCo to discuss what they are entitled to, why and when. Formal arrangements for access arrangements will begin to be confirmed to parents from July of Year 9 and throughout Year 10.

How are Exam Access Arrangements applied for?

Students need to be tested from the end of Key Stage 3 onwards for EAA. Just because they were entitled to EAA at KS3 does not automatically entitle them to it at KS4.
The member of staff qualified to assess for access arrangements will use a variety of nationally recognised tests such as:

- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test 2nd UK Edition for Teachers (WIAT-11-T)
- Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH)
- Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing 2nd Edition (CTOPP2)
- Lucid EXACT – this is usually only used to provide supplementary evidence

This is not an exhaustive list, and is subject to change, as the assessments are replaced/updated periodically in line with current practice. The test that the assessor uses depends very much upon the type of barrier to learning that the student may have. Should the student need further testing to assess for other learning issues or further EAA, the assessor will arrange this. Following a report produced by the assessor an application is made to the Awarding Bodies for permission to implement the specified arrangement(s).

There are some considerations with this access arrangement application:

- The authorisation granted by the Awarding Bodies lasts 26 months, therefore it is prudent to assess and apply for EAA in the June/July of ear 9 in order that any permitted exam access arrangements are in place for the full GCSE period of both Year 10 and 11.
- When a candidate progresses from GCSE/BTEC to GCE A-Level (i.e. KS5), a reapplication must be made. Per the JCQ guidelines, it is possible to “roll forward” the application for EAA, however the centre must have available evidence which clearly shows that the EAA is still needed for GCE, AS and A-Level examinations.

- There is a deadline imposed by the Awarding Bodies for when exam access arrangements can be applied for. This date is usually at the beginning of February, although the exact date changes yearly.
- “Normal way of working” is a very important principle, sometimes even considered the most important. An application for EAA made late in Year 11 validity as there is little or no evidence of the EAA being “Normal way of working”. However, within this concept, BHS recognises that on very rare occasions some students can mask learning difficulties and significant concerns raised in Year 11 will still be investigated. In these situations, even if tests results meet the JCQ criteria, substantial evidence from teachers will be needed to support any possible application and without this we cannot apply for formal EAA. While Parental Referrals are valuable, the phenomenon of issues being suddenly and unexpectedly raised in the weeks and months before external examinations is a serious concern for the JCQ.

<u>What are the procedures for processing an application?</u>
Once the student has a completed Form 8 in place, assessments have been conducted and there is a recommendation from the assessor for EAA, the school can then apply to the awarding bodies. Once confirmed by the awarding bodies, parents are informed and the EAA is then added to student records and class lists.
The application will require evidence of need, and the centre needs to hold evidence in its files that can be inspected at short notice. This can include:

- Recommendations by teachers
- Educational psychologists’ reports
- Letters from outside agencies such as CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services), hospitals or doctors
- Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

Permission from the Awarding Bodies for the arrangement(s) requires:

- A signed copy of the Form 8 report by the assessor and SENCo
- A data protection form signed by the student

Access arrangements may cover the entire course and for GCSE and GCE qualifications must be processed using access arrangements online as early as possible. Deadlines for submitting applications for access arrangements and modified papers online for GCSE and GCE qualifications are set by the JCQ. The deadline dates are final. Failure to meet JCQ deadlines may result in more rigorous school inspections by JCQ. The decision to apply for access arrangements is based upon evidence of a history of need, history of provision and a specialist assessor access arrangement report.